Imagine a world where we’re as immersed in nature as we are in technology, where we come to all of our senses, where we fill more alive. – R. Louv

---

**Nature-based Interventions in Residential Settings**

Brett Talbot, PhD, The Ascent Programs  
Derek Daley, SUDC, Legacy Outdoor Adventures and RTC

---

### Introduction

The ubiquitous concern regarding over-dependence on electronics has driven researchers to explore counter-balancing strategies for achieving mental health among youth through nature-based therapeutic interventions.

Our goal is to help people assess what type of connectedness they experience, what goal they’re trying to achieve, and what type of connectedness is required to achieve that goal. And then make a plan to do so in whatever community/circumstance they’re in and to whatever degree they are able.

### Definitions

**Nature**: the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.

**Connected**: brought together or into contact so that a real or notional link is established.

**Nature-Connected (NC)**: engaging with nature with health related goal driven intention.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature Disengaged</td>
<td>Little to no connection or use of nature. Thinks rarely of nature or outdoors</td>
<td>Office, car, home, video games, technology, city, computer, school, work, etc.</td>
<td>Disconnection due to urbanization, loss of green space, parental fears and control, etc. Louv, 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Aware</td>
<td>Rarely engages or uses nature in an intentional way. Has awareness of trees, plants, grass, parks, etc. and values their existence.</td>
<td>Appreciates sunset, notices rainstorm, seeks the room with a view of nature, etc.</td>
<td>2015 Nature Awareness study; citizens send strong messages to policy makers…giving greater consideration to the impact of their actions on nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Responsible</td>
<td>Takes steps to preserve nature in some way (e.g. gardens, plants in yard, etc.). Makes efforts not to destroy nature.</td>
<td>Picks up trash, recycles, supports causes, donates or volunteers, etc.</td>
<td>Nature Connectedness influences 4 core areas: enjoyment, empathy, sense of oneness, and sense of responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Connected</td>
<td>Connects with nature some-what intentionally. Enjoys being in nature, but not for any specific goal or purpose. Finds value/benefit in being in nature.</td>
<td>Goes to park, walks outside, goes to zoo, etc.</td>
<td>The Human-Nature Relationship and Its Impact on Health: A Critical Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Engaged</td>
<td>Engages with nature with health related goal-driven intention on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Hiking, fishing, ropes course, walks/jog/run outside, bike, yoga/meditation outside, etc.</td>
<td>National survey shows interaction with nature has a range of significant health, ecological and economic benefits. Governments are implementing policies to increase humans’ engagement with nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Immersed</td>
<td>Engages with nature with health related goal-driven intention for extended periods of time.</td>
<td>Camping, backpacking, nature-based/wilderness therapy, Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare, NOLS, adventure retreats, etc.</td>
<td>Growing empirical research that OBH programs are effective. Over 90 peer reviewed studies in last 6 years showing positive gains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**RTC Implementation**

1. Assess client nature-connected type.  
2. Identify health/wellness goal.  
3. Determine nature-connected type likely required to achieve that goal.  
4. Identify opportunities and limitation within current setting/community.  
5. Create opportunity within current setting/community.  
6. Make treatment goals/plans to achieve type of nature-connectedness with intent of addressing health/wellness goal.

---

**Conclusion**

1. Connecting to the health benefits of nature can be an ambiguous concept. People encounter the natural world in many ways, from growing plant at home to full immersion wilderness therapy.

2. The Nature Connectedness Typology provides a simple tool to assess one’s current level of connectedness.

3. The Nature Connectedness Typology levels can then be used for treatment planning and identifying strategies to align NC type to a specific health or wellness goal.

4. Residential Treatment settings can use The Nature Connectedness Typology to create opportunities within the treatment milieu to allow clients to connect with nature and benefit from the correlated health outcomes.